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RUEHUR/USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE 0267

INFO RUEHLE/AMCONSUL Leningrad 4199

RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 4689

RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0802

RUEHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN 7112

RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 5053

RUEHDA/AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST 4412

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8313

RUEHMO/AMCONSUL MUNICH 4240

RUEHIC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 9708

RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 6804

RUEHPR/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 4992

RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 4336

RUEHJA/USMISSION USBERLIN 4578

RUEHNA/USMISSION USNATO 6331

RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 5881

RUEHAAA/CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

RUEHORA/USNMR SHAPE BL

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TOR: 181428Z NOV 78

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, CU, UR
SUBJECT: INITIAL SOVIET PRESS COMMENT ON MIG-23
DEPLOYMENT IN CUBA

1. PRAVDA NOVEMBER 18 CARRIES INITIAL SOVIET PRESS COMMENT ON EVANS AND NOVAK COLUMN REPORTING DEPLOYMENT OF MIG-23 AIRCRAFT TO CUBA. SIX-PARAGRAPH ARTICLE APPEARS IN ROUTINE FORMAT ON INTERNATIONAL PAGE UNDER TITL "THEY ARE BLOWING SOAP BUBBLES," AND IS AUTHORED BY PSEUDONYMOUS A. PETROV. ASSUME FULL FBIS TRANSLATION AVAILABLE TO ADDRESSEES.
2. ACCORDING TO PETROV, THE WASHINGTON POST COLUMN REPORTS THAT MIG-23 AIRPLANES HAVE APPEARED IN CUBA AND MAINTAINS THAT THIS APPARENTLY CONTRADICTS THE SOVIET-AMERICAN UNDERSTANDING OF 1962. SUCH ASSERTIONS, PETROV WRITES, FROM BEGINNING TO END ARE "GROUNDLESS AND PROVOCATIVE".
3. AFTER IMPUGNING MOTIVATION OF EVANS AND NOVAK, ARTICLE STATES THAT "ACCORDING TO THEIR BASIC CHARACTERISTICS, THE AIRCRAFT (ABOUT WHICH EVANS AND NOVAK WRITE) IS OF THE SAME TYPE WHICH HAVE BEEN AND ARE IN CUBA, ARE AND REMAIN ESSENTIAL FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE LEGAL INTERESTS OF THIS SOVEREIGN STATE". NO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SOVIET-AMERICAN AGREEMENT OF 1962 THEREFORE ARISE. THEY CANNOT ARISE, THE ARTICLE CONTINUES, BECAUSE THE SOVIET UNION "HAS FIRMLY ADHERED AND ADHERES TO ITS PART OF THE UNDERSTANDING," PROCEEDING FROM THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE U.S. WILL DO LIKEWISE. PRAVDA ARTICLE NOTES THAT THE CONSTRUCTIVE POSITION OF CUBA IS ALSO WELL KNOWN IN THIS REGARD. *Yach*
4. EVANS AND NOVAK COLUMN IS SAID TO BE "INSPIRED" BY PERSONS FROM THE RANKS OF THOSE OPPOSED TO EQUAL AND MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS SOVIET-AMERICAN COOPERATION. COLUMN IS DESIGNED, ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, TO EVOKE A NEW WAVE OF SUSPICION TOWARDS THE USSR AT A TIME WHEN THE STRATEGIC ARMS NEGOTIATIONS HAVE ENTERED THEIR "DECISIVE PHASE". THE PRAVDA ARTICLE WINDS UP BY

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 INFO RUHHLG/AMCONSUL LENINGRAD 4200
 RUDKRB/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 4690
 RUHHEB/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0803
 RUHHL/AMEMBASSY BONN 7113
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 RUDKDA/AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST 4413
 RUHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8314
 RUHMO/AMCONSUL MUNICH 4241
 RUOTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 9709
 RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 6805
 RUDKRP/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 4993
 RUDKSA/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 4337
 RUHJA/USMISSION USBERLIN 4579
 RUHNA/USMISSION USNATO 6332
 RUDKRW/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 5882
 RUSNAAA/CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
 RUDORRA/USNMR SHAPE BE
 RHFRAB/CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE
 RUFDAAA/CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE
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MIGS-CUBA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 28221

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OF THE AIRCRAFT, THUS LEAVING THE SOVIET READER IN THE

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DECLARING THERE IS ONLY ONE CONCLUSION (ABOUT THIS MATTER) WHICH CORRESPONDS TO "THE REALITIES": NAMELY, THAT COMMON SENSE AND THE INTERESTS OF THE NATIONS OUGHT TO HAVE PRIORITY OVER THE "MERCENARY INTERESTS OF THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AND THOSE CIRCLES WHICH EVANS, NOVAK AND THEIR KIND SERVE".

5. COMMENT: AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, KOSYGIN TOLD THE MEMBERS OF CODEL RIBICOFF/BELLMON ON NOVEMBER 16 THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS NEVER VIOLATED THE 1962 UNDERSTANDING (MOSCOW 28094 NOTAL). THE MIG-23 ISSUE AROSE AGAIN LATER ON NOVEMBER 16 DURING THE CODEL'S PLENARY DISCUSSION WITH SUPREME SOVIET DEPUTIES. BOTH CANDIDATE POLITHURO MEMBER PONOMAREV AND CPSU INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR ZAMYATIN ADDRESSED THEMSELVES TO THE SUBJECT AT THAT MEETING, BUT THEIR REMARKS SEEMED OFF-THE-CUFF AND THEY BASICALLY SOUGHT TO MISREPRESENT THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S COMMENTS TO MEAN THAT THE DEPARTMENT KNEW THE AIRCRAFT WERE NOT NUCLEAR-CAPABLE (TO BE REPORTED SEPTEL).

(1)

(2)

6. WHILE THE PRAVDA ARTICLE, MOSCOW'S FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE ISSUE, THUS ECHOES KOSYGIN'S DENIAL OF A VIOLATION, THE ARTICLE LEAVES THE SOVIETS CONSIDERABLE ROOM FOR ADJUSTING THEIR PUBLIC POSITION IN FUTURE DAYS. IT IS SOMEWHAT CAUTIOUS, BOTH IN FORMAT AND SUBSTANCE. THUS IT AVOIDS ANY EXPLICIT CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DEFENSIVE/OFFENSIVE ROLE OF THE AIRCRAFT. IT IS SILENT ON THE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE NUCLEAR CAPABILITY

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DARK AS TO THE NATURE OF THE ISSUE. AND THE ARTICLE IS
AUTHORED BY THE PSEUDONYMOUS MR. PETROV. IT FALLS
SHORT OF AN AUTHORITATIVE OFFICIAL COMMENT OR A TASS
STATEMENT (THE LATTER WAS USED WHEN THE SOVIETS DENIED
IN OCTOBER 1970 THEIR INTENTION TO BUILD A MILITARY BASE
ON CUBA). TOON

END OF MESSAGE

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